



HERRITY REPORT



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September 2008 “A Month in Review”

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Gatehouse II – School Administration Building a Bad Deal

At the September 22, 2008 meeting, the Board of Supervisors declined to provide the EDA bonding necessary to finance the purchase of the Gatehouse II building. The school system wanted to purchase the Gatehouse II facility in order to consolidate the administrative staff. While the formal vote was unanimous there was significant disagreement among the Board of Supervisors. The school system is actively working to revise the proposal to bring it back to the Board of Supervisors. I am a strong believer in consolidation and the efficiencies they typically bring. However, the proposal put forth by the school system was a bad deal. Here are just some of the reasons:

Purchase Price is Too High. The school proposed paying \$52M for a building that was purchased by the current owner for \$44M just two years ago. Building values have fallen in the last two years. The schools consultant indicated it was a good deal because fully leased up the building would be worth \$60M. However the building has no leases.

Minimal Cost Saving. The estimated cost savings over the 30 years was presented at \$22M. This equals less than \$1M per year. The savings for Gatehouse I was presented at approximately \$25M but is now estimated to be at only \$10M. As noted in the following two paragraphs the savings is both understated (no reductions for personnel efficiencies) and overstated (much of this benefit does not pass to taxpayers).

School Cost Savings Does Not Equal Taxpayer Savings. Much of the \$22M in cost savings results from the elimination of the cost of operating and maintaining the current buildings. However the project as presented keeps all of the properties in Fairfax County's hands meaning taxpayers continue to pay the cost. Most of the buildings were proposed to be transferred to the Board of Supervisors but there was no discussion or plan on use or disposal of these properties – especially given our pending reductions – meaning that taxpayers likely would continue to bear the cost even if the schools did not.

No Reduction of Personnel for Efficiencies. The school claims that the consolidation of offices would result in efficiencies. However the only positions that were eliminated due to this consolidation were the custodial and building maintenance staff. If there are real efficiencies then I would expect to see real reductions in staff being proposed as a result.

Failure to Consider Upcoming Administrative Staff Reductions. The school administrative staff has grown at a significantly higher rate than the school population. Based on the current Lines of Business Review being undertaken by the school I would expect to see a significant reduction in administrative personnel. The proposal kept the school administrative staffing at the same level as current level when looking at the administrative facilities need for Gatehouse II.

There were several positive outcomes from the proposed purchase of Gatehouse II, the biggest being the availability of three schools currently used for administrative staff that are or will be needed as schools – Dunn Loring, Lacy and Devonshire. However in my opinion these positives were significantly overshadowed by the points above and may be able to be accomplished with staff reductions. In this time of limited resources we need to be focusing on our teachers, school and kids and not adding administrative space.

South County Middle School – Almost a Reality

Back in the March 2008 Edition of the Herrity report I talked about the status of the South County Middle School and my efforts to help this school become a reality. I am pleased to report the construction of new middle school in South County is on the right track to be completed by 2012. I had been pursuing the construction of the middle school through a creative public private partnership (PPEA). The County and School staff developed an alternative approach and that is the direction it is heading at this time. The County offered the use of \$10 million of its bonding capacity to accelerate the construction of the school. As you will recall this was initially to build a wing rather than a new school. We were able to convince the county board to direct that it be only used for the middle school.

On June 19, 2008 the Fairfax County School Board passed the following motion stating: *the School Board accept the Fairfax County capital funding in the amount of \$5 million in FY2009 and \$5 million in FY2010 approved by the Board of Supervisors for the purpose of building a middle school in the South County area; further direct the Superintendent to immediately enter into discussions with Fairfax County and the Fairfax County Park Authority for the purpose of exchanging the existing County-designated “middle school property” for other County or Park Authority owned property in order to take advantage of time sensitive PPEA opportunities and/or acquire the existing “Nike Adaptive Reuse area” site adjacent to the existing South County Secondary School site as the new site for a middle school; and further direct the Superintendent to work with the County to utilize these funds and the previously approved \$2 million and such other additional new funding that may become available to leverage the additional funding or financing necessary to execute a contract for the construction of a South County middle school to be completed before 2012 that does not displace any other project currently funded for planning or construction by the Capital Improvement Program; the construction of the middle school will not be financed through the use of any funding mechanism that will require the use of School Board operating funds to pay interest on anticipated bond funding; direct the Superintendent, when preparing the CIP for FY 2010-2014, to advance the construction of a south county middle school to no later than FY 2014, and report to the Board in a separate document or exhibit to the CIP which school projects will be displaced or delayed as a result, and the expected change in the timing of those projects.*

This plan is currently being implemented by the school staff. I had attempted to keep the PPEA alive as a backup plan but was not successful. We still have a couple of hurdles to cross (the December CIP hearings and the November 2009 bond), but I am confident that with continued leadership from our elected officials and hard work from our citizens we will all see the construction of the South County Middle School finally completed. This effort is a great illustration of elected leaders (Springfield School Board Member Liz Bradsher, Mount Vernon School Board Rep and School Board Chairman Dan Stork, Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Delegate Dave Albo, Senator George Barker and myself) and citizens (Christine Morin, Rob Robertory and the South County Middle School Solutions Group) working together to find creative ways to address pressing community issues.

The building of the South County Middle School will not only help the situation at South County Secondary School it will benefit the communities of Lake Braddock Secondary School, West Springfield High School, Lee High School and Hayfield High School by providing the necessary capacity required to deal with the influx of students expected from BRAC.

BRAC 133 – Timetable Drove a Horrible Decision

As Herrity Report readers know I have been actively trying to get the Army to select the GSA Warehouse as the site for BRAC 133. This site provided the best answer for the Army and had broad support from the business community, the Army personnel that are being relocated, the Board of Supervisors, and both Congressman Davis and

Congressman Moran. Congressman Moran's support was particularly significant since all three of the sites that were considered are in Congressman Moran's district. Despite our hard work, the Army let the timetable drive the decision and in my opinion they made a horrible decision. **Below is an op-ed I wrote on the issue.**

The original goals of the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 2005 were to move DOD facilities to a) secure locations, b) that were government owned, and c) to reduce cost. These moves were to be accomplished by 2011.

The Army's recent announcement of the Mark Center site as its choice for the location of the Washington Headquarters Service (WHS) and related DOD components (BRAC 133) fails to meet any of these criteria. The Mark Center site is the smallest of the three sites being considered and cannot meet the preferred set back requirements for security purposes. The site is not government owned but will need to be purchased. The cost of the site will be higher than the other sites because the land will need to be purchased, Alexandria will need to be compensated for the lost tax revenue, and the increased construction costs including structured parking and blast proofing.

Although not a BRAC criteria – the site is the absolute worst possible answer from a transportation standpoint with no access to mass transit. Many of the BRAC 133 employees currently work in Crystal City where they have access to VRE, Metro and commuter busses. Mark Center has no VRE or Metro access. As many of these employees live to the south they will be forced to hit the roads and drive through Fairfax County.

Asst. Secretary Eastin's comments indicate that the decision was entirely timetable driven despite the fact that there is no penalty for failure to meet the BRAC timetable. Fairfax County, the region, taxpayers and the Army will be forced to pay the penalty for years to come for this shortsighted decision in terms of worsening traffic, poor security, poor employee morale, higher cost, and lack of flexibility for the future. My bet is that the Mark Center will even fail to meet the BRAC timeline.

The GSA site offered the best solution as the most cost effective, with the best security – full setbacks, the flexibility for the future growth, the best transportation solution – highway (FFX Pkwy, 395,95,495), HOV, Metro, Bus, VRE, etc, and provided the best answer for the BRAC 133 employees. The GSA site was supported by Congressman Moran and Congressman Davis, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the local business community and the BRAC 133 employees.

The decision will allow Asst. Secretary Eastin to leave his post in December with the ability to say that he met the BRAC timeline but unfortunately the region and taxpayers will be living with the impact of this poor decision for a long time.

Citizen's Budget Review Committee Well Attended

The September 2nd meeting of my Citizen's Budget Review Committee was extremely successful. Over 40 citizens from all over Fairfax County came to the meeting which

featured a presentation from Fairfax County Budget Director Susan Datta. After Susan's presentation we all participated in a lively and informative discussion. If you were unable to make that meeting and would still like to get involved there will still be plenty of opportunities. This committee is open to anyone who is interested in Fairfax County's budget. You don't need to have budget experience or be a financial wiz, we are just looking to put people together and open a dialogue on the way we spend money in Fairfax County.

We have begun the formation of groups who will be looking at specific areas of the Fairfax County budget. I will be sending out a separate Herrity Report next week on the current budget news and process.

First Springfield District Nights Concert a Huge Success!

Thanks to everyone who came out to our first Springfield District Nights concert at Burke Lake Park on Saturday, September 20th. Over 400 people attended and the performers, Bill Kirchen, Rocknoceros, and Iona, all put on great performances. Again I'd like to thank our sponsors EnviroSolutions and The Peterson Companies. Without their generous donations these free community concerts would not be possible.

Now if you missed our concert on the 20th, don't worry - you will have plenty of opportunities to come out and enjoy a show next summer. Starting in June we will be having a free community concert every Thursday night at Burke Lake Park. Look for the schedule of performers to be published next spring.

Recognizing the Importance of the Government Contracting Industry

Fairfax County has one of the most dynamic and vibrant local economies in the world. The main driver of this economic success is the presence of a number of successful government contracting firms which are either headquartered here in Fairfax or have a large presence in our County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Fairfax County was first among all U.S. counties in the value of Federal Contracts performed locally with over \$14 billion in contracts performed for Fiscal Year 2006. And since Fairfax County is the economic engine of Virginia, these companies are essential to the economic vitality of the Commonwealth as a whole as well.

Some of the larger contracting firms with headquarters in our County are Booz Allen Hamilton, Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), General Dynamics, ManTech International Corporation, Bearing Point, and SRA International. Northrup Gruman, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon also have large presences in Fairfax County. In addition to these larger companies there are numerous small and mid-size firms that provide essential services to the Federal Government while also providing jobs to our citizens and revenue to fund the services we provide to our citizens.

At a Board of Supervisors meeting earlier this year I made a motion to declare October 7th “Government Contracting Day” in Fairfax County to recognize the important contribution these firms and the industry make to the County, the region and the nation. The motion was unanimously supported by my fellow Board Members and on October 7th I presented a proclamation declaring it “Government Contracting Day” at the 6th Annual Greater Washington Government Contractor Awards Ceremony co sponsored by the Professional Services Council, the Government Contractors Council of the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce and Washington Technology.

Upcoming Events and Information Items

October 28th – West Springfield Renovation Town Hall Meeting – 7:30 PM

SOAR West Springfield – Spartans Organized for Action on Renovation – is hosting a town hall meeting at **7:30 PM on Tuesday, October 28th, 2008** at West Springfield High School to review and discuss WSHS’s projected status in the new Capital Improvements Program (CIP) renovation queue. While the founders of **SOAR** have made a tremendous amount of progress, they simply can not do the rest alone. This must be a large community wide effort including alumni, future WSHS parents, local businesses, and various community groups. There will be multiple members of the Fairfax County School Board at this town hall meeting and a message needs to be sent that the WSHS community is organized and willing to work hard to secure WSHS’s proper place on the CIP. Visit **SOAR’s** website at www.soarwestspringfield.com.

October 16th – Foreclosure Town Hall Meeting

This **Thursday, October 16**, I have planned a town hall meeting on the foreclosure crisis for homeowners and renters who live in the county. This event is co-sponsored by the Seoul Presbyterian Church and The Korean Daily. It will be held from **5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Seoul Presbyterian Church, 6426 Ox Road, Fairfax Station.**

At the presentation, homeowners can find out about strategies to prevent foreclosure, workout options when mortgage payments are no longer affordable, predatory lending practices, and foreclosure rescue scams. Renters can get information about what to do if the property they are renting is facing foreclosure, how mortgage foreclosure affects a rental dwelling and what happens after the foreclosure is final.

Information will be presented by the Homeownership Division of the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and the Consumer Affairs Branch of the Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection. Representatives from Legal Services of Northern Virginia also will be available to answer questions.

Seating is limited so registration is required. To sign up, call the Springfield District Supervisor's office at 703-451-8873, TTY 711. For reasonable accommodations, please call 703-246-5101.

Marshall Cemetery Dedication – October 19th at 2:00

In my May and Summer #2 Herrity Reports, I told you about the efforts to restore Marshall Cemetery which was recently vandalized and the formation of the Fairfax County Cemetery Preservation Association led by two of our History Commissioners, Lynne Garvey-Hodge (Springfield District) and Mary Lipsey (Braddock District). They have organized a dedication ceremony for Sunday, October 19, at 2 p.m. and are still recruiting interested volunteers to adopt and monitor the cemetery. The Association is using the restoration of the Marshall Cemetery as a pilot program for addressing other cemeteries. If you are interested in learning more about the dedication ceremony or other information or if you would like to assist this group, please contact Mary Lipsey at christopherlipsey@verizon.net or Lynne Garvey-Hodge at lghassoc@erols.com.

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